

FAQs: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT BLOOMINGTON’S WATER



WHY IS THE WATER FROM MY FAUCET CLOUDY?

OCCASIONALLY WE RECEIVE CALLS reporting water that appears cloudy or milky. Usually indicating the presence of either oxygen or calcium, cloudy water is perfectly safe to drink.

Oxygen in water: Sometimes water fresh from the tap appears cloudy. Within a minute or two, the cloudiness rises toward the top of a glass and before long the whole glass is crystal clear. This is caused by excess oxygen escaping from the water.

Changes in water temperature and pressure can cause the oxygen dissolved in it to reach a “supersaturated” state where more oxygen is in the water than it can hold. When the water passes through a faucet, the disturbance is enough to knock the oxygen out of the water, forming microscopic bubbles. The bubbles are so tiny that it takes them a long time to rise through the water. No harm will come from using oxygenated water and you need not take any corrective action if you experience it.

Calcium in water: When calcium causes cloudiness, it is usually noticed in cold water. Let a glassful of the cloudy water sit for about thirty minutes and a white or grayish substance may settle to the bottom of the glass. The substance is calcium, a product of our water treatment process. Such water is perfectly safe to drink or use for cooking, though it may be unappealing to look at.

The chemistry of water is surprisingly complex and many factors influence how it behaves. We treat Bloomington’s water so that it is slightly prone to deposit a trace of calcium sediment as it travels through our distribution system. This helps to keep our water from becoming corrosive and reduces the likelihood that it might attack our water mains or leach lead or copper from our customers’ plumbing and fixtures. *See What can I do to minimize exposure to lead in water?* Usually, this calcium sediment remains at the bottom of the water mains, unnoticed by our water users.

However, the calcium can be stirred up when a large volume of water is drawn through a water main in a short time. Events that can increase water velocity include firefighting, main breaks, hydrant maintenance and water or street cleaning trucks filling their tanks at a hydrant. If you happen to turn on your cold water right after such an event, you may draw some of the stirred-up water into your pipes.

To clean calcium sediment from your system, we recommend that you wait for an hour or two to allow the water in the main to settle. Then open a large-bore faucet, such as a tub faucet, and let the cold water run for about 20 minutes. This will draw clean water through your system and should remove any remaining calcium from your pipes. Please call us if you have any concerns about cloudy water or if your water remains cloudy after taking these steps.



WHAT CAN I DO TO MINIMIZE EXPOSURE TO LEAD IN WATER?

The presence of lead ranks among the most common health concerns people have about drinking water. Recent studies suggest that levels of lead once thought to be safe can in fact pose dangers, especially to unborn babies and children. Fortunately, over years of regular and rigorous monitoring, Bloomington’s water has never been found to be a significant source of lead.

In fact, lead pipes, solder, brass faucets and other plumbing in your home pose the greatest threat of adding dangerous levels of lead to your water. A few simple practices can minimize your exposure to lead from your home. First, always use cold water for your cooking and drinking. If your plumbing contains lead, hot water will draw more lead out of it. Second, allow your cold water to run until it runs very cold – a minute or more. This flushes out any water that may have been in your pipes long enough to pick up higher concentrations of lead. If you are concerned about your home’s lead levels, our laboratory can test your water for a fee.

Water regulates the Earth’s temperature. It also regulates the temperature of the human body, carries nutrients and oxygen to cells, cushions joints, and protects organs and tissues. The human brain is 75 percent water. Human blood is 83 percent water and bones are 25 percent water.

American Water Works Association



SHOULD I GET A WATER FILTRATION SYSTEM FOR MY HOME?

Because Bloomington’s water surpasses all federal and state standards, home filtration systems are not necessary. However, if you choose to purchase a filtration system for aesthetic or medical reasons, keep the following in mind:

- Choose a system that addresses your specific concerns. Find out if the type of filter you are considering is capable of removing substances that concern you.
- Look for filters that have been certified by NSF International (an independent testing group) and UL (Underwriters Laboratory).
- Follow the manufacturer’s maintenance instructions carefully. When not properly maintained and serviced, filtration systems can harbor disease-causing bacteria and may actually cause illness.

DO I NEED A HOME WATER SOFTENING SYSTEM?

Our lime-softening process removes most of the hardness in Bloomington’s water, reducing it from 19 grains per gallon (raw water) to about 5.4 grains per gallon (finished water). The water is also treated to be noncorrosive. This helps prevent unsafe levels of lead and copper from leaching into the water from home plumbing. Home softening systems can further reduce water hardness, usually by adding a small amount of sodium.

OTHER QUESTIONS?

Feel free to contact us at any time with your questions about drinking water. Our water plant’s telephone number is 952-563-4905.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

FOR PEOPLE WITH COMPROMISED IMMUNE SYSTEMS

SOME PEOPLE MAY BE MORE VULNERABLE to contaminants in drinking water than the general population. Immuno-compromised people, such as people with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, people who have undergone organ transplants, people with HIV/AIDS or other immune system disorders, some elderly, and infants, can be particularly at risk from infections.

These people should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers. Environmental Protection Agency and Centers for Disease Control guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by Cryptosporidium and other microbial contaminants are available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline: 1-800-426-4791.

RADON IN WATER

RADON IS A RADIOACTIVE GAS THAT occurs naturally in some groundwater. It poses a stomach cancer risk when ingested and a lung cancer risk when released from water into the air during showering, bathing and washing dishes or clothes.

The EPA’s Maximum Contaminant Level for radon is 300 pCi/L. In tests of Bloomington’s water in 2004, our results are well below this limit.

Some states have adopted an Indoor Air Program that requires citizens to reduce radon in indoor air. Because radon in indoor air poses a much greater health risk than radon in drinking water, a more lenient “Alternate Maximum Contaminant Level” of 4000 pCi/L generally applies to water in those states. Minnesota is currently in the process of adopting such an Indoor Air Program.

For more information on radon, contact the Environmental Health Division at 952-563-8934 or go to the City’s Web site at www.ci.bloomington.mn.us, keyword: Radon.